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New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission; and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Mogae is joining via video-teleconference from Juba.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's 30-day report as well as on the situation in South Sudan.

Let me begin by saying that we welcome the signing of the 21 December Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access between the South Sudanese parties. This represents a significant achievement on the part of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with the full support of the region and the international community.

Nevertheless, the signing of the Agreement, while a great stride forward, is only a first step. The security situation in the country remains of concern, and there continue to be numerous violations of the Agreement, with clashes between pro-Taban Deng Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Opposition and pro-Machar SPLA in Opposition forces in Koch, Unity, and between the SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA in Opposition forces in Mundri and other areas of Western Equatoria, as well as in different parts of the country. The Security Council will have the opportunity to hear from the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, former President His Excellency Festus Mogae, on the violations reported by the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism on 16 January.

These violations by the parties and the continuing hostile propaganda they have undertaken against one another are worrisome, as they illustrate a lack of genuine commitment to honour their words and de facto undermine regional and international efforts to revitalize the peace process. At this point, I can only reiterate the 12 January joint statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Secretary-General, who strongly condemned those violations and underscored their clear intent to support the imposition of consequences, consistent with the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué of 20 September 2017, should the parties continue to violate their own agreement.

The South Sudanese parties must realize that the international community and the region will not continue to tolerate agreements being signed and violated in total impunity. I urge the Council to speak out very clearly against those violations and to take the decisive actions necessary to impose real consequences for the violators.

Regarding the security situation in Juba, the attacks by unknown armed elements on Government security installations in Gurei sector in the city, and Kapuri, west of Juba on 4 January, are of concern. On 5 January, the SPLA Spokesperson attributed those attacks to forces associated with Lieutenant Colonel Chan Garang, a commander reportedly close to the former Chief of General Staff, Paul Malong, who defected from the SPLA to pro-Machar SPLA in Opposition in October 2016. The objectives and motivations behind these attacks are not clear. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) continues to closely monitor the security situation in Juba and the consequences the tensions between the Government and the former Chief of General Staff may have in Northern Bahr El Ghazal and other parts of the country where forces loyal to him remain deployed.

Meanwhile, on 4 January, there were also shooting incidents between security forces and criminal elements in the vicinity of the protection-of-civilians sites adjacent to the UNMISS headquarters in Juba. UNMISS immediately reinforced such sites with additional uniformed personnel to prevent any entry. The volatility of the security environment in and around sites remains a source of concern. During

the reporting period, intercommunal violence also escalated in the Jonglei, Lakes and Warrap areas, causing approximately 160 fatalities, including at least 24 women. UNMISS reacted swiftly to those incidents by mobilizing community leaders and peace actors to de-escalate intercommunal tensions and promote dialogue and reconciliation.

Under the Mission's efforts to extend its presence, I am encouraged to report that tomorrow Special Representative of the Secretary-General Shearer will travel to Yei, in Central Equatoria, to formally inaugurate a new UNMISS base. The base will allow the UNMISS force to project its presence, build confidence and restore stability to an area that has witnessed massive depopulation to Uganda as a result of recent conflict. UNMISS has also intensified actions to establish an increased presence in Akobo, in northern Jonglei, in order to support humanitarian efforts and to gain a presence in areas held by the SPLA in Opposition. At the moment, UNMISS long-duration patrols allow a semi-permanent presence, which the Mission plans to build upon in order to build confidence with the local community.

The deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) continues, with ongoing discussions with the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and of Rwanda to expedite the deployment of the main contingents of their respective infantry battalions. The number of RPF troops deployed in South Sudan currently stands at 759.

With respect to human rights, I deeply concerned about the high level of grave abuses and violations perpetrated against civilians, mainly women and children. The gravity of conflict-related sexual violence is deplorable and constitutes an emergency in its own right. From January to December 2017, UNMISS documented 111 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, which is a very conservative figure given that the Mission's ability to perform its monitoring and reporting tasks to verify violations suffered by victims has been restricted by interference by Government institutions and access restrictions. There were 2,670 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence in 2017, including conflict-related incidents perpetrated by both State and non-State actors. For example, on 16 January, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism report on sexual and gender based violence in Central Equatoria indicated that there was clear evidence that sexual violence, mutilation and sexual assaults by uniformed SPLA soldiers and other Government security services continued to prevail in Central Equatoria.

Unfortunately, such human rights violations are compounded by impunity, as perpetrators are not held to account. For instance, on 20 December, a South Sudan National Police Service officer who had been sentenced to three years imprisonment for raping a minor was released the same day, allegedly on the order of the High Court Judge. That contributes to the perception of impunity across the country. I call on President Kiir to put to an end to such impunity. South Sudanese women and girls cannot continue to be victimized and brutalized and no justice done.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, on which Assistant Secretary-General Mueller will brief the Council, I remain concerned about the constraints on the operating environment for humanitarian operations. Humanitarian convoys continue to encounter checkpoints, extortion, harassment and acts of violence. While much of that can be attributed to criminality, I call on the Transitional Government of National Unity to work towards compliance with President Kiir's directive of unfettered humanitarian access, and call on all other parties to allow humanitarians to carry out their life-saving tasks across the country.

On the national pialogue process, subnational consultations were held in Western Bahr El Ghazal and Western Equatoria in December, while they are ongoing in Eastern Equatoria, Lakes, Warrap and the Administrative Area of Pibor. The consultations were carried out largely in Government-controlled areas, although efforts to reach opposition constituencies were made in Raja, Western Bahr El Ghazal. Participants in the consultations were mostly able to express their grievances and views, and the open dialogue often exceeded the expectations of local communities.

Unfortunately, there were instances when security personnel prevented consultations from being held. For example, on 2 December, in Torit, Eastern Equatoria, security officials prevented a pre-dialogue meeting from taking place, and even threatened to arrest the Chair of the women's association who was attempting to convene the meeting. I must emphasize that it is imperative that the national dialogue process be conducted in an inclusive, transparent and credible manner, as well as be supportive of the efforts to

revitalize the peace agreement and restore sustainable peace to South Sudan.

With respect to the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum, the second phase is expected to resume on 5 February in Addis Ababa, and to focus on governance, transitional security arrangements and the permanent ceasefire.

In conclusion, as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General stated on 12 January, it will be crucial for the South Sudanese parties to participate in the Forum in good faith and with a view to making the necessary compromises required for South Sudan to return to the path to sustainable peace. That will be the critical moment for the parties to demonstrate their political will to negotiate a permanent ceasefire and update the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.

The President: I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mogae.

Mr. Mogae: At the outset, I should like to thank you, President Umarov, for your kind invitation to brief to the Security Council today.

Just before Christmas, six months of hard work came to fruition with the successful convening of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) High-level Revitalization Forum in Addis Ababa, where 14 South Sudanese parties and other key stakeholders came together to confront the challenges facing South Sudan after 18 months of devastating chaos. The first phase of the Forum dealt with the cessation of hostilities and, like the Council, I am pleased that the comprehensive Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access was signed by all parties on 21 December 2017. According to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism, the new cessation of hostilities agreement has had a generally positive effect on reducing the overall level of violence in the country. However, I am disappointed to note that, within a few weeks of its signing, the Agreement has now been violated by no fewer than three of the signatory parties.

Since 24 December 2017, when the Agreement came into effect, fighting and troop movements have been reported in Unity, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Central Equatoria states, causing further displacement and disturbance of civilians. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism quickly published reports on two outbreaks of violence, in Koch and Mundri, apportioning blame to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition and Sudan People's Liberation Army in Government, respectively. The Chair of the Mechanism has advised me that a number of other incidents and alleged violations are currently under investigation, and I hope to receive further reports very soon. I condemn those acts of violence and call upon all signatories to the cessation of hostilities agreement to disseminate the terms of the Agreement to their subordinate commanders and ensure immediate and consistent compliance.

Within the past week, I have had cause to publicly demand full support for the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism. Statements have been made in the media by the Transitional Government of National Unity that have the potential to undermine public confidence in regional and international peacekeeping efforts. The Mechanism's teams are direct representatives of IGAD and the wider international community for the purpose of verification on ceasefire compliance in South Sudan. As such, they deserve full respect and total cooperation. Such denigration of international peacekeeping missions, including the Regional Protection Force, is unacceptable. I call upon the Security Council to reiterate its support for the Mechanism.

As I speak now, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism is leading a workshop in Addis Ababa with all its signatories, which seeks to put in place the practical mechanisms and cooperation required to deliver and enforce that cessation of hostilities agreement. I commend the Mechanism for taking the lead on that, and all the signatories for their participation. I furthermore urge the parties to cooperate fully under the terms of the Agreement so as to ensure unhindered access to the monitoring and verification teams in the field.

As we begin a new year, it remains my belief that the IGAD-led revitalization process provides us all with the most effective platform upon which to confront and resolve the severe security, governance, economic and humanitarian crises that continue to overwhelm South Sudan. I wish to commend the IGAD Special Envoy, Ambassador Ismail Wais, for his tenacity in leading that process.

The High-level Revitalization Forum will convene again in two week's time and continue its systematic review and invigoration of the Peace Agreement. It is beholden upon us all to keep our faith in that process and support it with all the resources at our disposal. The single most important contribution that can be made by the regional and international community is to speak with one voice. Only if we stand together, unified in our approach, will we help the South Sudanese leaders find and sustain the spirit of compromise and engagement that will deliver peace and stability.

In four days' time in Addis Ababa, His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Chairperson of IGAD, will host another consultative meeting with the United Nations, the African Union and the Heads of State and Government of IGAD. The resolute unity and determination of those three institutions will be necessary to bring about positive and sustainable change in South Sudan.

The speed and alacrity with which some parties and individuals violated the cessation of hostilities agreement leads me to raise, once again, the key issue of enforcement. For the revitalization process to be successful and have the value and meaning that we would all wish it to have, there must be a clear understanding among all South Sudanese leaders of the consequences of non-compliance and of the determination of the world to ensure that the agreements they sign are complied with. We cannot stand by as South Sudanese leaders sign an agreement one day and then authorize, or allow, its violation with impunity the next. We must address, with one voice, the issue of non-compliance and make clear the consequences to be faced by those who wilfully violate, spoil or derail the Peace Agreement in South Sudan.

As set forth by articles 14.2 and 14.3 of the current cessation of hostilities agreement, facilitated by IGAD, the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission shall report any serious breaches to the Transitional Government of National Unity in the Republic of South Sudan, IGAD, the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council for their action. The actions referred to may include the measures decided by the twenty-eighth Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government issued on 7 December 2014, namely, the enactment of asset freezes, the enactment of regional travel bans and the denial of the supply of arms and ammunition and any other material that could be used in war. It is now time to revisit the range of practical measures that can be applied in earnest to those who refuse to take those processes seriously and to make it clear to all concerned that the world will not tolerate any further disruption to our efforts to deliver peace.

Over the coming weeks, IGAD will continue along its path to revitalize the Peace Agreement. Along with the members of the Council, I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm my total commitment to that process. Together, with one voice, we can challenge those who peddle violence and self-interest. We urge the Transitional Government of National Unity and all parties to continue to engage in that inclusive, political process. As I said earlier, the IGAD Revitalization Forum is the best opportunity to restore peace and rebuild governance in South Sudan, and the process must not be delayed.

The President: I thank Mr. Mogae for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mueller.

Ms. Mueller: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in South Sudan.

Following the briefing provided to the Council on 7 December 2017 by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (see S/PV.8124), humanitarian partners launched the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan. Under the plan, humanitarian partners are seeking to assist 6 million people with life-saving aid and protection, which is more than half of the entire population of the country, even after more than 2 million South Sudanese already fled the country as refugees. An additional 1.9 million people are displaced within the country.

This highly prioritized humanitarian response plan requires $1.7 billion. Leveraging new funding in the coming weeks will be critical. Only through timely, adequate funding will the United Nations and humanitarian partners be able to procure and pre-position supplies during the ongoing dry season to ensure that we can prevent an already critical humanitarian situation from worsening.

According to the most recent food security analysis, 5.1 million people are currently estimated to be severely food insecure. That is an increase from the October to December period, and an increase when compared to this time last year. Some 1.5 million people are in emergency-level food insecurity, just one step away

from famine, and around 20,000 people are already in famine conditions. The next lean season, which begins in March, is likely to see food security worsen, and could see famine conditions spread to several new locations across the country.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and their situation is projected to deteriorate. An estimated 250,000 children will be affected by severe acute malnutrition in 2018, requiring urgent life-saving interventions. The new Executive Director of UNICEF, Henrietta Fore, underscored that point during her recent visit to South Sudan. The alarming levels of food insecurity and malnutrition are closely linked to people's inability to plant or harvest due to the ongoing conflict and constraints upon their freedom of movement. Cultivation continues to be severely limited by widespread violence, displacement and destruction of assets. Last year, the traditionally surplus food-producing areas of Greater Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal saw a significant decline, producing between 30 and 50 per cent less cereal than in 2016. Ongoing clashes surrounding food production are of serious concern this year.

I am also deeply disturbed by the continued high rates of sexual violence. In 2018, humanitarian partners estimate that 1.8 million women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence. In response to such staggering figures, partners are aiming to scale up support services to reach nearly 400,000 more vulnerable people than last year.

Since the last briefing to the Council on this topic (see S/PV.8132), violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses have continued to be perpetrated by both the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition. Civilians have continued to be killed and forcibly displaced by clashes between the parties, including in Yei River state and Lasu in Central Equatoria and Northern Liech in Greater Upper Nile. Several thousand people have fled to Ethiopia and Uganda just this month.

The implementation of the Republican Order for the Free, Unimpeded and Unhindered Movement of Humanitarian Assistance Convoys, issued by the President in November, has been inconsistent, and the humanitarian access situation across South Sudan remains highly complex and unpredictable. However, there have been some positive developments. Last week, the International Organization for Migration announced that, for the past month, it has been able to provide consistent primary health care in Greater Baggari, an area south of Wau that was cut off from assistance by the SPLA for more than a year. In Western Equatoria, a humanitarian convoy delivering assistance to Congolese refugees in Yambio County was completed safely for the first time this month without force protection.

Yet, overall, access challenges have continued to delay and interrupt the humanitarian response. Last month, in Unity state, truck drivers delivering humanitarian supplies by road from Juba reported a total of 66 checkpoints controlled by SPLA and different non-State actors, with some charging fees. This month, in the Upper Nile region, the SPLA and the national security mounted a new roadblock along the Aburoc-Kodok road, demanding payment for commercial and humanitarian vehicles. I would also like to highlight that in December, humanitarian organizations relocated 65 aid workers due to fighting, bringing the total number of relocations for 2017 to over 600.

Unfortunately, such access challenges follow a long-established pattern. In 2017, at least 28 aid workers were killed in the line of duty, and over 1,100 incidents were reported, the highest annual count since the start of the conflict. Those incidents included killings, kidnappings, attacks against humanitarian assets and bureaucratic impediments. An example of the latter is the increased fees for work permits for foreign nationals — from $100 to as much as $4,000 — imposed by South Sudan's Labour Ministry.

The challenging operating environment is restricting the ongoing dry season prepositioning of supplies and overall programme delivery. Health, nutrition, food security and the provision of other life-saving assistance and support are regularly interrupted and hundreds of thousands of people are without access to assistance for extended periods of time. Obligations under international humanitarian law remain in effect for as long as the armed conflict lasts. I join the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in calling upon the parties to the conflict to adhere to international humanitarian law and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access, as specified in the 21 December agreement on the cessation of hostilities.

Despite the challenges, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners reached more than 5.4 million people in South Sudan last year. Over 5.1 million people received food assistance and emergency livelihoods support. More than 2.5 million people received emergency health kits, and some 900,000 children and pregnant and breastfeeding women received emergency nutritional assistance. More than 2.1 million people benefited from water and sanitation programming; 900,000 people were provided with vital emergency items, including blankets and mosquito nets; more than 390,000 children benefited from educational programming; and over 560,000 people received services addressing gender-based violence. In 2018, humanitarian partners hope to assist even more people to avert a further deterioration in humanitarian conditions. That includes providing protection services to 4 million people and food security and livelihood support to 5.5 million.

In conclusion, I call upon the members of the Security Council to help mobilize timely investment in the 2018 humanitarian response plan to ensure that life-saving assistance reaches those most in need; to use their influence to ensure that the parties to conflict comply with all their obligations under international humanitarian law; to ensure that the parties to the conflict respect and protect civilians, including humanitarian workers, and civilian objects, including humanitarian assets, and to make sure that the parties to the conflict meet their obligations to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need. Such obligations were acknowledged and restated in the President's decree on access and in the cessation of hostilities agreement. Humanitarian workers need to be able to safely deliver aid, when and where it is most needed. The people of South Sudan deserve nothing less.

The President: I thank Ms. Mueller for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank the briefers for talking about this very important issue facing us.

The United States has been a supporter of South Sudan from the beginning. Since independence, we have invested well over $11 billion in South Sudan and the Government of President Kiir. What began with so much promise has slipped into a state of horror that has haunted all of us for more than four years now. We have tried to help; we have tried to find a solution. The Security Council has tried to help as well. Our support has consisted of much more than mandating a peacekeeping mission. The Council has lent its expertise, its guidance and its credibility to the effort to help South Sudan's leaders find peace. We have treated the Kiir Government as a partner in this effort. We have assumed that the best interests of the people were its priority.

Thus, in November we welcomed President Kiir's Republican Order for the Free, Unimpeded and Unhindered Movement of Humanitarian Assistance Convoys, but instead of reaching more struggling South Sudanese, aid workers continue to be blocked in record numbers and the parties just will not stop fighting. The Government continues to insist that aid workers pay high fees just to provide assistance to the people of South Sudan. These fees would cost the humanitarian community $7.6 million — money that should be used to provide clean water in a country plagued by cholera. It could provide shelter for some of the 2 million internally displaced or it could feed some of the six million people facing life-threatening hunger.

Nonetheless, our support has continued. We were encouraged by the efforts of South Sudan's neighbours to create a forum to negotiate peace, but President Kiir delayed and attempted to undermine the process. We welcome the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access which that forum produced in December, but hours — hours — after the Agreement went into effect, it was violated. Instead of reporting the end of fighting in South Sudan, independent ceasefire monitors are reporting that Government forces continued their deployments despite the agreement. Not surprisingly, more fighting followed. Opposition forces are also responsible for the fighting. Forces under Riek Machar's command spearheaded an attack in which at least 15 civilians were killed, and on 4 January forces loyal to a former South Sudan Army Chief orchestrated an attack on a Government checkpoint.

All of this is bad news. It is not just a lack of forward momentum; things are going backwards in South Sudan. Just last month, President Kiir promoted three generals who this Council sanctioned in 2015. These are men who led the slaughter of innocent South Sudanese children, women and old men. Hundreds of

victims reportedly were buried in mass graves and the Government of South Sudan decided to promote their killers. Human Rights Watch called this a slap in the face of justice. It is also a slap in the face of the Security Council and the nations that have supported the Kiir Government. It is a slap in the face of basic decency. Our attempts to ease the suffering of the people of South Sudan are not working and what is worse, we are failing — not despite the leadership of South Sudan but because of it.

The time has come to acknowledge the hard reality that the leaders of South Sudan are not just failing their people, they are betraying them. Thus, the Council is at a crossroads. We are morally obligated, and obligated under the terms of the Charter of the United Nations, to address threats to international peace and security in South Sudan. We cannot stand by idly as innocent civilians are murdered and raped. We must change course. It is long past time that the Security Council establish an arms embargo on South Sudan rather than continue to hold endless meetings on a crisis that only becomes worse each month. I urge my fellow Council members to support an arms embargo. This is neither punishment nor is it a meaningless gesture. It is something we can do to actually help the people of South Sudan to slow the violence, slow the flow of arms and ammunition, and protect innocent lives.

Every council member can and should act on the position we all took in our 14 December presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/25) to impose costs and consequences on those who undermine the peace process in South Sudan. At the upcoming Intergovernmental Authority on Development High-level Revitalization Forum, the parties must find the political will to compromise on longer-term security and governance arrangements that meet the needs of South Sudanese people. If they do not, the Security Council should work with the region to find a new path to pursue peace.

At the upcoming African Union (AU) Summit, we urge the African Union to consider seriously the accountability measures it pledged for those who refuse to pursue peace. The AU can hold these individuals responsible for violating the ceasefire and obstructing the peace process, including through the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan. And it is past time for the leaders of Uganda and Kenya to get involved and put pressure on President Kiir. They are key players in the success of a true peace process.

The Government of South Sudan is increasingly proving itself to be an unfit partner to the Council and any country seeking peace and security for the people of South Sudan. The United States will never give up on this effort, but if there is to be true peace in South Sudan, its leaders must step up and make a true commitment to ending this conflict once and for all. The time is theirs to determine the future of South Sudan.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their briefings. We are also pleased to have President Festus Mogae and, as always, we appreciate his briefing on the recent developments in South Sudan, particularly those relating to the high-level revitalization forum.

The security situation in South Sudan still remains fragile and the dire humanitarian situation continues to be of serious concern. That is why reaching an agreement on the cessation of hostilities was accorded the utmost priority at the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) High-level Revitalization Forum. In fact, the parties were able to sign on 21 December 2017 the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. This is a major achievement that should be welcomed, and we commend all the relevant stakeholders who worked tirelessly for it to come to fruition. The agreement is hoped to bring an end to the senseless violence in the country so that conducive conditions would be created for a more substantive political discussion among the parties to address the complex challenges the country is facing, as well as to ensure a safe environment for delivering the acutely needed humanitarian assistance.

However, the reported violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement — here both sides are implicated — is dimming the prospect for progress in ending the conflict. This is very unfortunate and deeply regrettable. It will undermine the genuine efforts being exerted to help South Sudanese parties to address the root causes of the conflict in South Sudan through an all-inclusive dialogue that would pave the way for national reconciliation and the building of effective State institutions through a democratic process.

All the parties must live up to the letter and spirit of the agreement that they themselves have agreed to uphold if there is going to be any hope of turning the tide in South Sudan. As we have been saying all along, the success of the revitalization process and in

addressing the enormous challenges that South Sudan faces will really depend on the willingness of all the parties. All violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement must be investigated, and we appreciate what the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism has been able to accomplish so far in collaboration with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan — reporting and verifying violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement under very difficult and challenging circumstances.

We would like to stress that all signatories to the cessation of hostilities agreement are obligated to ensure unrestricted access to the Mechanism's ceasefire monitors so that they can accurately and speedily report on the situation around the country. We must also stress that those reported violations should not be used as an excuse to undermine the second phase of the High-level Revitalization Forum, which is scheduled to be held during the first week of February. In fact, we should build on the positive momentum generated so far. The upcoming IGAD meeting is expected to lay the groundwork for the resumption of the second phase of the Forum.

In all of that, the support of the international community, in particular that of the Security Council, remains absolutely critical. The Council should maintain its unity and continue speaking with one voice, as expressed in its latest presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/25), in urging the parties to participate in the Forum and live up to the commitments they made.

We are extremely grateful for the support provided to the revitalization process so far by the African Union, the United Nations, as well as other regional and international stakeholders. That support needs to be further strengthened and continue on a regular basis.

We are pleased to note, as President Mogae indicated earlier, that the leaders of the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD will meet on 27 January on the sidelines of the African Union Summit, as part of maintaining the unity of purpose among the three organizations in the search of lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan. We hope that will provide impetus for the second phase of the Forum.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing. We also thank Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, for their efforts to address the situation in South Sudan.

The Security Council, the African Union and other relevant actors have decisively shown their support for the initiative led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). They all agree that this is a unique opportunity to find a way out of the conflict and finally bring about lasting peace in South Sudan. However, it is clear that a process of this nature will not yield positive results unless the parties take their commitments seriously and show genuine political will to implement them.

In that connection, we regret and vigorously condemn the violations of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, finalized on 21 December 2017 at the conclusion of the first phase of the High-level Revitalization Forum. We call on the parties to avoid future clashes and comply with the responsibilities they agreed to, such as ending hostilities, protecting civilians and ensuring safe and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance, which are crucial to moving on to the second phase of the Forum, slated for February.

We welcome the efforts that IGAD has been undertaking for several months to ensure the success of the Forum. We highlight the fact that it has been possible to bring together all stakeholders and to engage in dialogue with them. We express our support for the launching of the second phase, as well as our hope that the negotiations can be carried out in good faith and with the serious commitment of the parties. We reiterate that a sustainable solution to the conflict in South Sudan can be arrived at only through an open and sincere political process and an inclusive dialogue that facilitates the fulfilment of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

The difficult security-related and economic circumstances in South Sudan have unleashed a difficult humanitarian situation. According to reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 7 million South Sudanese need humanitarian assistance and there is a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons who are experiencing a lack basic services, food insecurity and outbreaks of diseases, such as cholera, in addition to the situation of vulnerable segments of the population, such as women

and children, who require special attention. We are concerned about the many challenges for this year and we call on the international community to cooperate with OCHA to guarantee humanitarian assistance in South Sudan.

We also believe it is essential to ensure a good operating environment for humanitarian workers and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). We call on Government and opposition forces to provide security to humanitarian workers throughout the territory and to allow unrestricted access to humanitarian aid.

With the progress made in the deployment of the Regional Protective Force (RPF), we hope that a more robust presence of UNMISS patrols can be extended and guaranteed in areas with a higher incidence of clashes, such as in Equatoria, Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile. We call on the Government to make the requisite administrative procedures less bureaucratic in order to render the deployment of the RPF more agile, which we hope will give UNMISS more flexibility in deploying to prevent clashes between the parties. We believe that strengthening the three-level strategy for the protection of civilians is also a very important point that should be taken into account in the strategic review in order to improve the performance of UNMISS.

With regard to the Peace and Security Council summit that will take place on 27 January during the thirtieth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, Bolivia affirms its support for the conclusions to be adopted on the next steps to address the situation in South Sudan.

In conclusion, we wish to express our thanks to the United Nations team and to UNMISS for their commitment, excellent work and the sacrifices they are making in that country.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting and expresses its gratitude for the comprehensive briefings by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission; and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

Our remarks on the alarming situation in South Sudan will focus on two points: first, on the need to support the peace process and, secondly, on the obligation to put an end to, investigate and punish the recurring violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

First, with regard to the peace process, Peru supports every effort to revitalize the peace process in South Sudan. We emphasize that there can be no military solution to the situation in that country; on the contrary, it is necessary to strengthen the political dialogue through inclusive and transparent processes in which all parties participate. We believe that the High-level Revitalization Forum, aimed at revitalizing the peace process and facilitated by the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), constitutes the most viable initiative to guide the country towards sustainable peace. We encourage greater participation by women and young people in that process.

The support of the international community and of African organizations is important. The United Nations, the African Union and IGAD must maintain close cooperation with a view to acting in a consistent and complementary manner in supporting the process. At the same time, we believe that the internal dialogues fostered by the Transitional Government of National Unity should also be conducted in a transparent and inclusive manner, and be aimed at complementing the dialogue initiated by the High-level Revitalization Forum.

A permanent ceasefire is essential to resume a credible dialogue about the country's governance. We are concerned about violations of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, concluded last December. We believe that punishing those responsible should be considered. In that connection, we wish to emphasize the importance of continuing to make progress in the full deployment of the Regional Protection Force and of the need for the South Sudanese authorities to extend it their due support.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian situation and human rights violations, we condemn the attacks on civilians perpetrated indiscriminately by all parties to the conflict, including violations of the human rights of children, women, refugees and ethnic minorities, as well as the military use of hospitals and schools. We took note of the statement issued by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan following its fourth visit to the country, in December 2017. We remind the national authorities of their responsibility

to protect the population against the occurrence of atrocious crimes, including the duty to investigate and to punish the perpetrators.

We highlight the efforts of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to protect civilians under extremely difficult circumstances. We call on the authorities to cooperate with the Mission by removing any impediment to it fulfilling its mandate. We believe that it is unacceptable that there continue to be obstacles to access for humanitarian aid and an increase in reported incidents, including hostile acts against humanitarian workers by the State's own security forces.

To conclude, we would like to welcome the various initiatives by UNMISS to promote the participation of women and young people in the peace process. We believe that the strategic review under way should strengthen that line of action with a view to promoting sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the briefers — Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Assistant Secretary-General Mueller and Chairperson Mogae — for updating us today.

As all Security Council members are aware, the long-term stability of South Sudan is dependent upon securing a political agreement. To that end, we welcome the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) on the High-Level Revitalization Forum, in particular the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. I would like to thank, and pay tribute to IGAD and Ambassador Ismail Wais, who led efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table. The Revitalization Forum provides the best opportunity to secure a political agreement. It must be truly inclusive in order to deliver an agreement that is accepted and supported by the people of South Sudan. Women, youth and the broader South Sudanese civil society must all be allowed to participate meaningfully.

We made the Council's expectations clear in the presidential statement issued last month (S/PRST/2017/25) — an end to hostilities, cost and consequences for those who obstruct the Revitalization Forum process, and unimpeded humanitarian access. Let us now take stock of the progress that has been made.

First, hostilities have not ended. The cessation of hostilities agreement was violated almost immediately after it was signed, and fighting continues across the country today. We are particularly concerned about the fighting in Koch. The significant military build-up by the Government and by opposition groups in the Malakal-Tonga corridor are also extremely worrying, as are potential offensives in Yei and Akobo. We are also concerned by the movements of First Vice-President Taban Deng and his 500 troops in Jonglei state, which are both a violation of the cessation of hostilities and an inflammatory action in the run-up to peace talks. We therefore welcome the statement of the Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers of 29 December, which strongly condemned the violations and called for those responsible to be held to account.

That brings me to our second expectation — consequences for those who obstruct the negotiations process, which includes violations of the cessation of hostilities. We call on IGAD to use its Council of Ministers meeting on 27 January to set out defined consequences for violators. IGAD can identify such individuals and, collectively, we can take action against them. The Security Council must be ready to support IGAD, using all the measures at its disposal.

We welcome the joint statement by the United Nations and the African Union on 12 January and fully support South Sudanese civil society, which is calling for accountability for violating the ceasefire. We are concerned by the recent threats against civil society groups as they comment on the cessation of hostilities, which, as signatories to the agreement, they have every right to do.

We also welcome the efforts of the Chair of the new Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism to increase the timeliness of reporting. There have been marked improvements in the short time that he has held that post. We hope that he will build on those, including reporting on gender-based violence. An effective cessation of hostilities monitoring body is crucial if we are to prevent further violence. The Mechanism has a difficult job to do, and we call on the Government and opposition groups to stop impeding and criticizing it. We welcome the recent JMEC statement on that.

The consequences of the conflict are known all too well by the peple of South Sudan, who are victims of the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation. Two

thirds of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance in what is a man-made disaster. We condemn unreservedly sexual violence in South Sudan. In November, despite the President's decree calling for unimpeded access, nine aid workers were killed and aid was obstructed on more than 100 occasions. All parties to the conflict bear a responsibility for that, but the Government alone is responsible for the bureaucratic impediments — such as the $4,000 work permit fees which continue to hinder the efforts of the relief agencies to save lives.

The Council visited Addis Ababa last September for its annual meeting with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. At that meeting, we talked about supporting the African Union and its subregional organizations. Today, citing statements of IGAD, Chairperson Mogae asked us to make clear the consequences to those who violate, spoil or derail the peace agreement. Under-Secretary-General Lacroix urged us to show that there would be real consequences for violators. We therefore reiterate our call for an arms embargo. It would apply equally to all parties and would not single anyone out for blame. It would send a strong message to those who undermine the Revitalization Forum, and strengthen those in the region who are trying to bring the South Sudanese parties to peace. It is in line with what the region has called for — clear consequences for violators.

The parties in South Sudan must start putting the people of South Sudan first. They must fully engage with the Revitalization Forum and refrain from violence. They must allow humanitarian access to all who need it. We, as the Security Council, must also do our part to make the consequence of inaction, including by us around the table, clear because — make no mistake — inaction is a decision, too. It is a decision to allow people to be attacked and to die. We must hold those responsible to account now. The people of South Sudan can wait no longer. Let us not protect the warmongers and abusers. Let that not be a stain on the Council's conscience.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Chairperson Mogae and Ms. Mueller of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their very candid and sobering briefings to the Council this afternoon.

We remain deeply concerned about the security and the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. The Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, signed on 21 December, offers some hope that an end to the fighting is within reach. We hope that opportunity will be fully grasped.

Ending the seemingly unbreakable cycle of conflict, displacement and hunger endured by the people of South Sudan will require leadership, courage and commitment. The time has now come for the violence to end once and for all. We strongly condemn all violations of the peace agreements reached between the parties, and we call on all parties to immediately and unconditionally implement their obligations in good faith.

We welcome the fact that the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism has been able to conduct timely investigations and to report on violations of the agreements. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan should do what it can to support that effort. I am proud to say that the European Union has decided to support the Mechanism with more than €5 million.

The international community and the countries of the region have expressed their determination to ensure that the parties abide by their obligations and responsibilities. That determination has been clearly voiced both by the Council in its presidential statement of 14 December (S/PRST/2017/25) and in the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué of 20 September last year, quoted here earlier this afternoon.

We commend the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for its preparation of the High-Level Revitalization Forum, as well as the support provided by the African Union. The conclusion of its first phase, with the cessation of hostilities agreement, shows that constructive dialogue and compromise have the potential to yield progress. But as we have previously stated, the Forum represents a unique window of opportunity to reinvigorate the peace process. To grasp this opportunity, all parties must recognize that only a political solution can bring the conflict to an end.

It is imperative that the Council continue to stand unified behind the High-level Revitalization Forum, not least in view of the start of the second phase, which will be tasked with addressing some of the most difficult and contentious issues. The legitimacy and future achievements of the Forum will depend on the

transparency and inclusiveness of the process. In this regard, the full and effective participation of women is crucial, as is the active participation of civil society.

As we have heard, the humanitarian and human rights situation in South Sudan remain very serious, threatening the lives and undermining the dignity of millions. Violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law, including attacks on hospitals and schools, the use of access to food as a weapon of war, the recruitment of children and horrifying levels of sexual and gender-based violence are unacceptable and must come to an end. We welcome the steps taken so far to establish the hybrid court, which will act as a strong deterrent against atrocity crimes. I must say that we really appreciate and support the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the humanitarian agencies and actors, and we fully agree with the call made here this afternoon by Ursula Mueller on the parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, including humanitarian access, as well as the call on all of us to step up our humanitarian response in line with the demands on the ground.

The millions of South Sudanese caught up in this brutal and futile war have waited for more than four years for an end to the conflict and an opportunity to rebuild their lives and their country. The High-level Revitalization Forum has opened a space for peace, reconciliation and recovery. All parties must now fully engage and take this opportunity to set South Sudan on the path to sustainable peace and to end the suffering of the South Sudanese population.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I would like to thank Mr. Lacroix, Mr. Mogae and Ms. Mueller for their clear and, may I say, disquieting briefings.

Seven years ago this month, an overwhelming majority of the people of South Sudan voted in favour of independence. They voted for an independent, peaceful and stable future. Now, seven years later, irresponsible political leadership in South Sudan has created a conflict that the people of that country did not vote for. Despite the strong support of the international community, including the Kingdom of the Netherlands, currently millions of people are living in urgent need of food assistance and millions more are displaced, as Ms. Mueller just mentioned. Only one conclusion is possible: the political leadership of South Sudan has not had the interests of its own people at heart.

As others have said, we welcome the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access of 21 December. We thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) for their tireless efforts to establish the Agreement.

However, within hours the first violations of the Agreement were reported, and more violations have been reported since, as Mr. Mogae just said. To make things worse, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faces continued obstruction while attempting to report on the violations. These violations and restrictions are unacceptable. They raise the issue of enforcement and that of the consequences of non-compliance, as Mr. Mogae just said.

I will focus on three key issues for a sustainable peace in South Sudan: a peace agreement, accountability and humanitarian access.

First, concerning the issue of a peace agreement, the revitalization process led by IGAD is the most urgent challenge. We should put pressure on those who stand in the way of peace and undermine this process.

We continue to fully support the efforts of IGAD and call on all actors to engage constructively in the second round of the High-level Revitalization Forum. Experience has shown that such engagement will not take place without strong and united encouragement from the international community. This especially includes neighbouring countries. We support the recent statements issued by IGAD, the AU, the United Nations, the Troika and the European Union. This, of course, includes the call for serious consequences for those who obstruct the peace process and violate the cessation of hostilities.

The situation in South Sudan has reached a critical point. The international community, including the Council, must respond with the strongest possible pressure.

This brings me to my second point, the issue of accountability. There can be no lasting peace without justice. We cannot wait for the guns to fall silent before we start holding to account those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, especially horrible crimes of sexual violence, as was mentioned just now.

The establishment of a hybrid court, as agreed by the South Sudanese parties in 2015, is an essential step

to address impunity and bring about justice. We urge the authorities of South Sudan and the African Union to establish the court as soon as possible.

My third point concerns the issue of humanitarian access. Despite the 9 November presidential decree to allow unhindered movement, access on the ground has not improved, as Ms. Mueller just highlighted. Humanitarian organizations continue to face unacceptable bureaucratic, operational and physical obstacles in trying to provide assistance to those most in need. For donors such as the Kingdom of the Netherlands, this is unacceptable, and it should be unacceptable for all members of the Council.

In addition, we are extremely concerned by the interim report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, which concluded that starvation has been used as a weapon of war in Wau county and surrounding areas. We call on the Government of South Sudan and all other parties to allow quick, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need. This includes respect for the full freedom of movement of UNMISS, whose work is essential to facilitate humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, the key to South Sudan's future is, of course, in the hands of the people of South Sudan themselves. But the people of that country, especially women and children, continue to need our steadfast commitment as a Council to make their call for peace heard. Their voice is indispensable to the future of the country. The Council must stand by the people of South Sudan. We have to show that there are consequences, including sanctions, for every actor who continues to choose fighting over dialogue, conflict over peace, obstruction over cooperation.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands will support any measure that reduces the possibility of violence, including an arms embargo. Let me reiterate that we urge all the parties in South Sudan to allow UNMISS to do its work. The Security Council should see to it that UNMISS has the capacity to do so.

From that perspective, we look forward to the discussion on the renewal of the UNMISS mandate in March. It is our responsibility as a Council to ensure that the political leadership of South Sudan has the interests of its people at heart.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Assistant Secretary-General Mueller and Mr. Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission.

Late last month, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the international community, the High-level Revitalization Forum was successfully held, and the South Sudanese parties signed the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. China welcomes these developments and appreciates the active efforts made by IGAD.

China is ready to continue to support IGAD, the African Union and other regional and subregional organizations in playing a leading mediation role on the question of South Sudan. But we should also be mindful of the fact that the current political and security situation in South Sudan remains fragile and continues to face many severe challenges. The international community should further increase its support and assistance to South Sudan. It is imperative to continue to promote the political process in South Sudan, as a political solution is the only way out in addressing the question of South Sudan. China has noted that after the cessation of hostilities agreement was signed, there have been multiple incidents involving clashes and fighting.

China supports the 12 January joint statement of the Secretary-General and the African Union Chairperson on the question of South Sudan. We urge the parties to seize the important opportunity offered by the High-level Revitalization Forum, take concrete actions to implement the ceasefire agreement, immediately cease the fighting and violence return to the negotiating table.

The international community should continue to support the mediation efforts of IGAD, the African Union and other regional organizations and focus on assisting them to succeed in the second phase meetings of the High-level Revitalization Forum. Meanwhile, it is necessary to fully motivate the Government of South Sudan and enhance communication and coordination with the Government, while respecting the country's ownership and leadership of the political process.

I agree with what was said by the representative of Ethiopia. The Security Council should remain united on South Sudan and speak with one voice. We should provide constructive assistance to South Sudan.

Secondly, it is crucial to further increase humanitarian assistance to South Sudan. The

humanitarian situation in South Sudan is dire. China calls on the international community to continue to provide necessary humanitarian assistance and economic support to South Sudan, and on the parties in South Sudan to provide the necessary humanitarian access.

China supports the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in continuing to fulfil its mandate, and we appreciate the efforts and contributions it has made to maintaining peace and stability in South Sudan. We hope that UNMISS and the Secretariat will continue to communicate with the South Sudanese Government and the UNMISS troop-contributing countries. We hope that the Secretariat will conduct an objective and comprehensive strategic review and assessment of UNMISS and focus its efforts on helping South Sudan to maintain peace and stability, restore development and put forward feasible recommendations on future adjustments of the functions and size of UNMISS.

China has always supported the peace process in South Sudan and been committed to assisting South Sudan to achieve peace and development. China stands ready to continue to play a constructive role in achieving lasting peace, stability and sustainable development in South Sudan.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller and Mr. Festus Mogae for their very comprehensive briefings.

Poland is deeply concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan. The humanitarian situation is extremely disturbing. One-third of the population has been displaced, with over 2 million seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and nearly half of the population estimated to be experiencing severe food insecurity. It is humanitarian aid that keeps people alive. Poland therefore strongly insists on ensuring full and safe access for humanitarian actors in the country.

As in any other conflict, women and children suffer the most and are exposed on a daily basis to acts of violence, including ethnically motivated and gender-based violence. I would like to underline that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians lies with the Government, and it is the Government that must take concrete action to alleviate their suffering. All parties have to comply with their obligations under international law and put an end to the violations and abuses of human rights. It is of critical importance that are part is implement the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. We encourage the authorities to build credible and sustainable institutions based on the principle of good governance.

There can be no other solution to the crisis in South Sudan than a genuine and inclusive political process. In that regard, Poland supports the High-level Revitalization Forum led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which we see as the most viable initiative for peace at this time. We hope that the second phase of the forum will serve as vehicle for developing sustainable arrangements on power-sharing, governance and security in South Sudan. We call on all parties to engage in good faith and to deliver on their commitments.

While we understand that the IGAD High-level Revitalization Forum is a process and not an event, we would like to stress that it cannot be an open-ended process that drags on indefinitely while the population suffers. We fully agree with the policy of bringing the perpetrators of war crimes or crimes against humanity to justice. The Security Council should stand ready to take more decisive steps, in coordination with IGAD and members of the African Union.

Poland commends the efforts of UNMISS, which plays a critical role in protecting civilians, and looks forward to the finalization of the strategic review of the UNMISS mandate. We find it deeply regrettable that UNMISS continues to face several difficulties in delivering on its mandate. We would like to stress that the harassment of United Nations staff and restrictions on their movement are unacceptable. We also note with regret the level of deployment of the Regional Protection Force and call on the Government to facilitate is completion.

I would like to conclude by reiterating our appeal to all South Sudanese parties to engage in genuine political dialogue and to work constructively with international partners towards the aim of bringing peace and stability to the population, who have suffered over the past five years more than more than anyone ever should.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire thanks Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller; and Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and

Evaluation Commission, for their respective briefings on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1011) on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the overall situation in the country.

My statement will focus on three main points: obstacles encountered by UNMISS in the implementation of its mandate, the humanitarian situation in the country, and the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to revitalize the peace process in South Sudan.

Turning to my first point, as underscored in the report of the Secretary-General, UNMISS continues to face numerous obstacles in discharging its mandate, despite efforts made to improve security conditions in South Sudan. My delegation condemns the multiple obstacles imposed by the Transitional Government of National Unity to the implementation of the United Nations status of forces agreement, as well as the attacks perpetrated by anti-Government forces targeting UNMISS.

Against this extremely grave backdrop, Côte d'Ivoire urges all parties to the conflict in South Sudan to honour their commitments and, in accordance with the status of forces agreement, guarantee the full freedom of movement of UNMISS troops and facilitate administrative procedures required for its operations. Côte d'Ivoire would also like to encourage UNMISS to redouble its efforts towards the swift deployment of the contingents to form the Regional Protection Force. The operationalization of the Force should enable UNMISS to better deliver its mandate within an adequately secure environment.

My delegation also welcomes the commitment of the troop-contributing countries to the Regional Protection Force, and invites them, in collaboration with UNMISS, to accelerate discussions with a view to effectively deploying various troops to South Sudanese territory. In the same vein, we call on the Government of South Sudan to continue discussions with UNMISS on the use of the Tomping base by the units of the Regional Protection Force.

Secondly, Côte d'Ivoire is concerned that clashes in some areas between Government and opposition forces are displacing thousands of people. With approximately 2 million internally displaced people and more than 2 million refugees, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains more than alarming. Humanitarian organizations need access to the population more than ever before. Given the multiple obstacles to such access, Côte d'Ivoire strongly condemns the violence and abuse perpetrated against humanitarian personnel. It urges the parties to avoid any act that may obstruct the smooth delivery of humanitarian aid in the country, and above all, to respect and protect humanitarian personnel in their efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population.

Thirdly, my delegation welcomes the initiatives taken by IGAD and encourages it to continue its efforts in the context of the High-level Revitalization Forum. It also welcomes the holding of the high-level revitalization forum in South Sudan from 18 to 21 December 2017 in Addis Ababa, with the aim of laying the groundwork for a final resolution of the crisis in that sister country.

The Ivorian delegation is also pleased that the first phase of the Forum has resulted in the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians, and Humanitarian Access by the parties in conflict. My delegation strongly believes that the end of the conflict in South Sudan requires that the recommendations of the High-level Revitalization Forum be implemented in good faith by all concerned parties. In that regard, like the entire international community, it condemns the recent violation of the cessation of hostilities agreement, which occurred only days after its signature. Côte d'Ivoire urges the belligerent parties to exercise restraint and reminds them of their duty to ensure the protection of civilians, respect for human rights and humanitarian access. My delegation calls on all parties to truly commit to the quest for peace in South Sudan, while expressing its support for the second phase of the High-level Revitalization Forum to be held next month.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the strategic review recommendations to be submitted next month will enable our Council to strengthen the capacity of UNMISS in the context of its mandate renewal.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their particularly insightful briefings on the political, security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan and on the work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). I would also like to especially welcome Chairperson Festus Mogae, and thank him for the clarity and resolve of his briefing, in addition to his efforts towards the political process.

After more than four years of conflict and many dashed hopes, the High-level Revitalization Forum is an opportunity that the South Sudanese parties must seize in order to finally overcome their differences and finally commit to the prospect of peace. We welcome the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), chaired by Ethiopia and supported by the United Nations and the African Union, to bring those parties together in Addis Ababa and lead the first discussions. The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, signed on 21 December, was an encouraging development in itself, but it was immediately undercut by ceasefire violations.

In that context, the Revitalization Forum is currently in a key phase and its success will depend on several factors. On the one hand, it is essential that all parties respect the cessation of hostilities agreement that they have signed. In that regard, we commend the mobilization of IGAD, the African Union, the United Nations and many partners that have unequivocally expressed their expectations. We must consistantly and vigorously recall that such violations cannot be tolerated. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism must more than ever fulfil its monitoring role. It must enjoy the capabilities necessary to fulfilling its mission. Additionally, the parties should take advantage of the next session of the Forum in early February to reach a consensus on the revitalization of the 2015 peace agreement as soon as possible, including its power-sharing dimensions, governance, security arrangements and the fight against impunity. That is an essential issue and the raison d'être of the Forum.

In any case, it will be essential for the South Sudanese parties to expeditiously demonstrate their willingness to move forward on all topics. Hopes have all too often been left unfulfilled in South Sudan and political processes too often manipulated by the parties, which seem to continue to believe in a military solution and are struggling to sincerely engage in a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The process cannot be indefinitely open-ended. Neither the country, the region nor the community of nations can afford further procrastination.

We must therefore carefully monitor the South Sudanese parties. In that respect, as was unambiguously stated by Chairperson Mogae, in the event of violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement or the obstruction of the political process, we must not hesitate to adopt the measures necessary, including individual sanctions, to alter the calculations of the parties that are obstructing the peace process. France counts on the unification of IGAD countries to keep pressure on the parties.

France remains deeply concerned by the ongoing challenges to the United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian actors in their efforts to deliver necessary assistance to millions of vulnerable civilians. Ms. Mueller described the myriad obstacles that they face, including the fees imposed upon on them and the attacks and harassment they encounter. Fourteen humanitarian actors lost their lives in South Sudan in 2017, making it the second most dangerous country for humanitarian action, following Syria. In that regard, we recall that access to humanitarian aid must be comprehensive, safe, unconditional and unhindered. As Ms. Mueller stressed and the Executive Director of UNICEF pointed out during her recent visit to South Sudan, children and women are among the first victims of that unacceptable situation. Rape and sexual abuse must end. An arms embargo would contribute to the protection of civilians. France has long supported the establishment of such an embargo.

France also condemns the impediments that UNMISS continues to face in the implementation of its mandate. The blocking of UNMISS patrols and the arrest and intimidation of its officers and humanitarian personnel are intolerable. We call on the Government of South Sudan to fully implement its commitments in those areas.

The mobilization of the international community facilitated the convening of the IGAD High-level Revitalization Forum. More than ever, we must push forward in that joint effort to put an end to violence in all of its forms and secure prospects for peace for the people of South Sudan, who so sorely need it. That tragedy has lasted for far too long.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Mr. Festus Mogae; and the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller, for their briefings.

After hearing the briefings on the monthly reports of the Secretary-General on the deployment and

future needs of the Regional Protection Force and the challenges faced by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in discharging its mandate, let me thank the Secretary-General for the reports and UNMISS for its work, despite the tremendous difficulties and risks.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea is deeply concerned about the ongoing and critical situation in South Sudan. Five years after conflict broke out in the country, which had recently gained national sovereignty, it is of great concern that no tangible progress is being made in the areas of politics, security and the economy, nor with regard to the humanitarian and the human rights situations. More than 7 million are in need of assistance and 4 million are displaced within the country and in neighbouring countries. Food insecurity and ongoing clashes between the Government and opposition forces persist, and the situation could deteriorate in the upcoming dry season. In his briefing to the Security Council on 7 December 2017 (see S/PV.8124), the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix, stated that in such a challenging environment, UNMISS is committed to enhancing its efforts in a proactive manner in order to protect humanitarian facilities and supplies, evacuate humanitarian personnel and protect civilians, thereby preventing illegal recruitment, sexual violence and so on.

It is clear that the Council and the international community must redouble their support to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and determine how to shore up the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in order to revitalize the political process and end the current impasse. Although sanctions could serve as a deterrent and break the deadlock between the parties, it is also important for the Council to consider other pragmatic approaches, such as direct contact with the two sides and with neighbouring countries.

By way of example, Ambassador Nikki Haley travelled to Juba and Kinshasa in December last year. The visit yielded positive results in Kinshasa, but not in Juba, despite the promises made. In that regard, I call on the Council to ensure that the African Union and IGAD consider various options to help South Sudan to emerge from the critical situation that worsens every day. This year is a crucial one because the Security Council could make a decision on the future of UNMISS based on the outcome of the strategic review.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the entire UNMISS team for its determination amid immense challenges. Without the efforts of UNMISS, the situation in South Sudan would be much worse. The Security Council should bolster such efforts and work with the African Union and IGAD to establish direct contact with the parties directly involved in the conflict for the purpose of reaching agreement for sustainable peace that would end the suffering of South Sudan's people. As a member of the Security Council, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea will support all measures leading to sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller; and the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Mr. Festus Mogae, for their valuable briefings on the most recent developments in South Sudan.

We are concerned about the deterioration of the political and humanitarian situation in South Sudan. I would like to start by addressing the political situation. The State of Kuwait strongly supports the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in revitalizing the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians, and Humanitarian Access. We look forward to the second phase of the High-level Revitalization Forum, to be held next month, with the highest possible level of participation of South Sudan and its neighbours and friends, with the aim of achieving reconciliation among the South Sudanese people and thereby paving the way for a safe and stable future for everyone. We welcome the cessation of hostilities agreement signed by the parties at the High-level Revitalization Forum in December in Addis Ababa as a decisive step forward.

We would like to recall the presidential statement of 14 December 2017 (S/PRST/2017/25), urging the parties to the conflict to agree on mechanisms to monitor abuses so as to ensure that there would be costs and consequences for those who breach the peace agreement. What is particularly worrisome is the fact that violations occurred just a few days after the agreement was signed. We therefore fully support the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism in its efforts to verify abuses,

in particular in Unity, Western and Central Equatoria and Northern Jonglei states.

The disastrous humanitarian situation in South Sudan demonstrates the magnitude of a tragedy that is worsening by the day. Sixty per cent of the people are in need of assistance, including 1.1 million children who suffer from severe food insecurity. One-third of the people have become refugees or internally displaced, as we heard in the statement given by Ms. Mueller. At this juncture, I would like to thank the neighbouring countries of South Sudan, in particular Ethiopia, Uganda and the Sudan, for hosting the vast majority of South Sudanese refugees. We cannot condone the obstruction of humanitarian assistance or the harassment of humanitarian workers. We welcome the President's Republican Order for the Free, Unimpeded and Unhindered Movement of Humanitarian Assistance Convoys, and stress the importance of closely monitoring the implementation of the decree on the ground as soon as possible.

In spite of the challenges, the work of UNMISS peacekeepers, the Regional Protection Force (RPF) and all humanitarian actors is exceedingly noble and most deserving of the support and gratitude of the Security Council and of the international community. That is why we call upon all of the parties to facilitate their work by removing all obstacles and fully complying with the relevant Security Council resolutions and statements.

The Government of South Sudan declared its commitment to cooperating with UNMISS. Compliance with resolution 2304 (2016), on the deployment of the RPF, is very important and a commitment that must be met without further delay. We commend the tireless efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to finalize the strategic review of UNMISS and look forward to deliberations on it in the Council before the time comes to review the mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the strong ties that exist between the peoples of Kuwait and South Sudan, going back not merely seven years, to the independence of the Republic of South Sudan, but 40 years, during which we forged a strong friendship that translated into development aid affecting the daily lives of the people of South Sudan. The State of Kuwait looks forward to contributing to South Sudan's development on a basis of constructive bilateral cooperation in a peaceful environment, because conflict zones do not constitute an environment conducive to international cooperation and development.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller and Mr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, for their substantive briefings.

We believe that stabilizing the situation in South Sudan is possible only with a lasting ceasefire and an inclusive national reconciliation process. We therefore welcomed the successful conclusion on 21 December of the first round of the High-Level Revitalization Forum of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). We have taken note of the consistent efforts of regional representatives during the preparations and of Juba's constructive cooperation with regional States throughout this key event. We welcome the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access reached at the Forum. However, it is regrettable that almost from the start of the implementation of this Agreement, which is so important for the ordinary people of South Sudan, there have been mutual accusations of violations of it. We urge all South Sudanese stakeholders to comply strictly with the Agreement and to participate in the second round of talks, to be held in February. However, we can also allow for other negotiation tracks. The important thing is to ensure that all efforts are closely coordinated with the IGAD initiative. We call on the States of the region to maintain a united approach to the settlement in South Sudan, which is very important to ensuring proper support for the peace process.

We are pleased at the pace of the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) in South Sudan and assume that it will continue to operate with respect for the country's sovereignty and in accordance with the basic principles of peacekeeping. It is important that the front-line forces are already patrolling supply routes that are critical for the region around the capital. We call on the Government of South Sudan and representatives of the troop-contributing countries to assist the RPF in achieving operational readiness and, together with the Secretariat, to continue studying mutually acceptable modalities for the Force, including its deployment in the area of Juba airport.

We have taken note of the balanced tone of the Secretary-General's monthly reports and stand ready to

consider the recommendations of the strategic review of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, which is being conducted by the Secretariat at the initiative of the Secretary-General.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, President Mogae and Assistant Secretary-General Mueller for their comprehensive briefings on the situation in South Sudan.

Kazakhstan commends the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission for their steadfast efforts to advance the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which is the only way to achieve stability and progress in South Sudan. We welcome the success of the first phase of the eagerly awaited IGAD's High-level Revitalization Forum, concluded with the signing on 21 December of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. However, we are gravely concerned about the reports that the parties are violating the Agreement.

The continuing military action has deepened the dire humanitarian and economic crisis, which has already caused severe food insecurity for more than half of the population and forced 4 million South Sudanese to flee their homes. The presidential decree of 9 November ordering free movement for humanitarian actors has not produced tangible improvements in humanitarian access for those in greatest need. In this vulnerable situation, the task of protecting civilians and of ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law becomes all the more critical. We therefore call on all the signatories to immediately cease all hostilities, abide by their commitments and demonstrate their genuine political will ahead of the second phase of the High-level Revitalization Forum, which should be seen as a unique opportunity, not to be lost. They must invest and commit to making the Forum succeed. The Security Council must show unity in pressing the Government and the other parties to end all hostilities and act in good faith in the interests of the people of South Sudan.

In order to be more effective, the political negotiations should be accompanied by intercommunal reconciliation and confidence-building among local populations. International support in addressing the complex causes of the conflict, by implementing comprehensive strategies in economic development, disaster-risk reduction and resilience-building, is equally essential. Women and young people must be fully engaged in those tasks in order to ensure far-reaching and long-lasting results.

Finally, Kazakhstan greatly appreciates the work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in implementing its mandated tasks. We note that some progress has been made in deploying the Regional Protection Force, which will enhance UNMISS's capacity to protect civilians, improve the security environment and support the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Security Council.

Before I conclude, on behalf of the Council I would like to say goodbye to Mr. Petr Iliichev, first Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, since today is his last meeting in the Chamber in his current capacity. I hope that all the Heads of delegations share our sentiments and acknowledge and appreciate the professionalism and dedication that he has demonstrated throughout his five years of tireless work in New York. We cordially congratulate him on his promotion to the position of Director of the Department of International Organizations at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and wish him every success.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.